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of a complete and all-embracing loyalty that shall make a world of peace and joy even when families and nations retain their identity. Through the misery the human spirit is learning the majesty and the sacredness and the authority and the unmeasured illimitableness of the spiritual to which it is subject. And shall we not thereby come to that sense of a limitless love that is for all the evil as for the good, for the offender as for the innocent? Shall we not win some new comprehension of the love of God that passes knowledge and is never defeated by our sin and rebellion?

Our danger is and ever has been what is called, among other names, by the name of naturalism. It is the danger of conceding reality only to the claims of the sensuous life and its perceptions of the quantitative things that feed its sensuous desires. It is the danger of thinking all else to be a mere abstraction and unreality. It is a great thing, when masses of men loose themselves from this life of drift under the propulsion of our first-given desires and instincts, to feel and to know the indisputable reality and power for them of immaterial ideals. That is to enter into the forecourt of the temple of God.

THE RELIGION OF CHILDHOOD. I

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This is the first of a series which is sure to be of great value to all those who are engaged in church work.

The Protestant notion of religion was framed in an age which was strongly individualistic, and religion was naturally thought of as mainly an affair of grown-up people. Yet there is sufficient evidence that the Protestant fathers found themselves face to face with the religious status and needs of children. In so far as they retained the inherited sacramental magic of Romanism, they could fall back upon that; at any rate, children were safe if they were baptized. But, in so far as religion was viewed as

an individual concern, and as such chiefly intellectual—which view reached its *reductio ad absurdum* in Protestant scholasticism—the case of the child was indeed difficult. The only remedy seemed to be to impart a necessary minimum of information—as though religion were, for either childhood or maturity, chiefly an affair of intellect!

Although the custom of catechizing the young antedates the rise of Protestantism, it was under the stimulus of that movement that the authoritative

catechisms used by the Western church had their origin—the Anglican, the Heidelberg, the Westminster, and the catechism of the Council of Trent. The catechetical method of meeting the religious needs of childhood continues in greater or less degree the means by which a large part of Christendom discharges its obligation to the new generation. Though the practice obtains chiefly in the liturgical churches, it is by no means confined to them.

No exception can be taken to the method of religious instruction by means of question and answer. But exception must be taken to the notion that the impartation of ideas about religion is the chief means of meeting the religious needs of the new generation. And exception must also be taken to the belief that the ideas which are imparted to childhood must range across the whole of theology, as every one of the standard catechisms has endeavored to do.

As a matter of fact, Protestant Christendom has pretty well gotten away from the idea that the catechism alone can meet the need of the child for religious instruction. Where the state-church ideal prevails, religious instruction has been greatly elaborated; where the free-church ideal prevails, the Sunday school and other supplemental agencies of instruction have entered in. It would, however, probably be fair to say that instruction, the impartation of a definite body of religious ideas, is the prevailing notion of the real discharge of responsibility for the new generation.

If, as Professor John Dewey holds, education is life rather than preparation for life, its process must place emphasis upon activities and relationships as well

as upon formative concepts. This study is an approach to the question from the point of view of the present needs in child life which only religion can meet rather than from that angle which considers the complete mastery of a body of religious knowledge as the supreme prophylactic for the grown-up stage of existence. We shall together make some inquiry concerning what the experience of childhood in religion is, or may become, up to the so-called confirmation age (i.e., about fourteen), and how its growing and changing demands may best be met.

I. Childhood's Endowment and Inheritance

We might use the single term "inheritance," marking the distinction between biological and social heredity, but the two terms will help us to make the distinction between what childhood brings from the birth chamber and what it finds in the world outside.

There have been endless debates about essential human nature, passing over and under and through the question whether it is good or bad or mixed, and the approach in most of them has been theological. We may avoid adding another to the list by assuming the answer rather than debating the issue. Let us assume the evolutionary point of view and make our statement in psychological rather than theological terms. By so doing we shall avoid speaking as if there were a static essence at the basis of our humanity. What we discover is rather that our humanity is in the process of becoming something higher and completer, and that each individual member of the race bears

both the marks of his past and the promise of his future upon him.

The human individual at birth is endowed with a complex of tendencies which we term instinctive. Briefly characterized, they are racial habits. Most of them are but little in evidence at birth, yet they begin early to function, blending with experience to shape the complex of individual habits which is the groundwork of character. The formation of character is thus, from one angle at least, the blending of native with acquired characteristics. Beginning with the simplest needs of the physical organism, these instinctive tendencies range upward toward the higher needs of the moral self. Their function is to meet these needs in an initial way, but always with the condition, as they apply to man, that the higher needs shall pass finally from their control to that of individual will. The dominance of instinct is shorter and less exclusive in the life of the child than with the young of the animal orders, yet as an infant the human being is as truly upon the level of instinct as are the lower animals.

There are two opposing estimates of the inherited equipment of the child, neither of which has paid regard to his actual racial history. Both of them have dealt with the child as though he possessed a fixed or static nature. The one is the theological notion that the human being is from birth inevitably predisposed to evil only—"born in sin and shapen in iniquity." The other is the view that the child is at birth morally perfect and needs only to be kept untarnished, that he comes into

life trailing clouds of glory, if not bearing intimations of immortality. This was an inevitable optimistic, yet unscientific, protest against the distasteful view of depravity advocated by certain theologians.

Psychologically we are bound to deny both the innate depravity of the child and his innate moral perfection. Well up into childhood he can be said to have no well-defined moral status. He is a candidate for moral personality; more than that, he is a becoming-personality; but he is not yet a person in that sense which alone could justify either position. Yet it has to be said that in this instinctive complex which makes up his original endowment there is both potential good and potential evil. So good a psychologist as Professor Thorndike¹ contends that "the imperfections and misleadings of original nature are in fact many and momentous, and common good requires that each child learn countless new lessons and *unlearn a large fraction of his birthright*" (italics ours).

This view is based upon the following considerations: The race has come up through a slow process from a very primitive past. In that primitive past only those individuals survived who were possessed in superior measure of an equipment adapting them to meet the experiences common to such a life—to contend with the primitive savages who shared the forest with them, to master their brute enemies, and to meet and resist the tragic forces of nature. Ages of such experience developed as racial habits the more assertive traits. It is this lower series of native tendencies, culminating in the fighting instinct,

¹ *Educational Psychology*, I, 280.

which enabled man to survive upon the primitive level. And it is just these oldest and most primitive tendencies which have acquired the greatest biological momentum. But this original equipment of the individual is in part archaic. Judgment and the higher emotions must predominate and control or the culture stage of human existence becomes an impossibility.

These more primitive tendencies must be entirely inhibited or the form of their expression disciplined and sublimated, for their continued dominance over the individual, which apart from social discipline seems inevitable, will make him a social menace. As Thorndike phrases it, "the native impulses and cravings of man have to be tamed and enlightened by the customs, arts, and sciences of civilized life. . . . Instincts may be trusted to form desirable social habits only under strong social pressure, whereby the wants of one are accommodated to the wants of all." This being true, the child has both good and evil potentialities; only an adequate social discipline can assure the realization of the good, and, in spite of it, the evil is certain to come to at least sporadic manifestation.

In other words, for the first years of his life the human individual, the child, is largely under the direction of a complex of instinctive tendencies, and under this control his habits are forming, for "habit receives its push-off from instinct." If the child simply runs loose, his native impulses untamed and his native cravings unenlightened, he will form a set of habits—of customary modes of action and reaction—which will menace both society and his own

higher evolution. No blind trust on our part in the innate purity of childhood can save him from such a fate, no *laissez-faire* attitude toward him will secure him real moral selfhood. Indications of social tendency and good-will there will be, but these will never come to dominate him if he is left to himself, for the biological momentum of his archaic inheritance is too great. As a matter of fact, but few members of the race are wholly without more or less constant and helpful social discipline, and that is one reason why so few are hopelessly bad.

Just as that endowment which he brings with him from the birth-chamber is mixed, so also is the social inheritance into which he enters. The proportions of good and ill vary from family to family, from neighborhood to neighborhood, from nation to nation, from race to race, from generation to generation, and from age to age. And it not infrequently happens that the elements in what we fondly imagined an almost ideal situation are so combined as to fail of a happy result. If so very much depends upon social discipline and social discipline is itself so unsure both in ideal and method, then there are evidently many hazards. Even more deplorable than an ignorance of the highest standards is the all-too-frequent compromise with accepted standards. This wilful living below ideals ranges through all the life of the race above the primitive level, and each new generation comes under its influence.

Just because life is so truly and necessarily social, it becomes difficult to control the social forces which play upon the little candidate for personality. It is relatively more easy in early

childhood than when, as in later childhood, the individual broadens his range of activities and widens his circle of acquaintances. Yet, however difficult, the control of these forces must be undertaken, and for the reason that the plastic self of childhood is so open to every influence which affects it with any constancy. Instinct and environment fit together like lock and key, for nature has so made the human soul that it comes to its own only under this dual urge—the impulses from within and the suggestion from without.

Consider for a moment the instinctive tendencies which lure the child into the mystery of his environment. He is born into the world active, not passive, and his first activities are instinctive. Psychologists enumerate such lists as these: "sucking, biting, clasping the fingers or toes, carrying objects to the mouth, . . . crying, smiling, protrusion of the lips, frowning, gesturing, sitting up, standing, creeping, walking, climbing, imitation, emulation, rivalry, pugnacity, anger, resentment, sympathy, the hunting instinct, migrations, a great many types of fear, acquisitiveness, constructiveness, play, curiosity, gregariousness, bashfulness, cleanliness, modesty, shame, love, parental feelings, home-making, jealousy, pity," etc.¹ All these manifest themselves initially without having to be learned, and they all have ultimate social intent. Even the primary activities of infancy point forward to a time when activity itself shall be self-controlled and -directed, with the result that the individual will range far among his fellows.

Particularly when we consider that group of instinctive tendencies which some psychologists call the adaptive instincts do we see how they tie up directly with what environment or social heredity offers. Chief in this group are imitation, play, curiosity. Imitation is tremendously important in broadening the life of the little child, and he is therefore highly imitative. Environment selects the materials for imitation; the imitation itself is as inevitable as the sunrise. And this is just a part of what we mean when we speak of the extraordinary suggestibility of the little child, a suggestibility which carries us beyond imitation before it has done. Imitation itself passes over into play, and play soon demands the presence of others, either as foils or as fellows, thus bringing to bear upon the little playmate all the good and ill of his play circle. He learns how others live in this play world; and learns how to live with them according to the rules accepted, whether they are the best or not. And curiosity, the third of the adaptive instincts, is a right-hand ministrant of child life. Not wanton mischief, but the desire to know, to handle, to operate, to take to pieces that one may see, to determine what and what for—these are the roots of curiosity. And the child must want to know badly enough to pursue that investigation far, indeed, if he is not to be at length a mere babe in the woods of this big world.

Well, he does want to make believe, to play, to investigate; no trouble about that, no changing it. And we should be only glad if we could quite control the field of his operations, if we could choose

¹ Bolton, *Principles of Education*, p. 145.

the forces which should continuously play upon his life. In some measure we can, even if our world is mixed; and that is just the responsibility of the elder generation toward the new. Without stopping to ask what religion is, but assuming that it is not only compatible with, but essential to, the highest self-realization, we may rest assured that it must be a constant and controlling factor in the environment in order to have real influence with the child. This is not to assert that he will invariably respond as desired to the influence of religion. The scope of individual variation is so vast, the possible variety of environmental combination so great, that he may elect some other than the customary or conventional response. Yet it is not too much to say that those who are happily reared under the ministries of religion almost never pass quite from its control in their maturer years, for "as the twig is bent the tree is inclined."

II. The Religious Instinct and the Influence of Religion

A part of the instinctive equipment of childhood is the so-called religious instinct. Yet when we speak of religion as having a place in the instinctive equipment of childhood we should be clear as to what we mean. Certainly the religious instinct does not guarantee any idea or practice of religion as innate—not even the idea of God. What it asserts is rather the capacity for religion, that just as certainly as the flower turns toward the sun, if the sun shine undimmed, so surely does the individual self respond to a strong and constant religious presentation. The religious instinct is no guaranty whatever of an

active interest in religion or of an accurate understanding of religion, apart from the necessary and appropriate materials of experience.

Nor is the religious instinct independent of the inherited social tendencies; in fact, it is related directly to the capacity for social living and is dependent thereon. The power to know, to value, to depend upon, and to work with others is of a piece with the capacity for religion, for the knowledge and fellowship of God, the great Socius. The religious instinct is not less a human achievement nor more a gift of God than the social and regulative instincts in general, yet, at the same time, its range is greater, its function a culminating function.

How intimately the religious instinct is related to the whole social complex is evidenced by the way in which it reaches its first manifestation in childhood. Professor Coe has pointed out, in an article on "The Origin and Nature of Children's Faith in God,"¹ that the most distinctive of the social impulses is the parental instinct, and that "the religion of divine fatherhood and human brotherhood is the ideal flowering of this particular instinct." It is by virtue of the fact that almost from infancy the child assumes this instinctive parental attitude toward dolls, animal pets, and smaller children that he is able to make a vital response to the idea of God—"he 'learns to do by doing,' he learns to love the Father by nascently performing fatherly functions." To quote Professor Coe further:

What is vital to our present purpose is to see that this element in human nature is

¹ *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1914.

operative in children from the start. It is not a postponed instinct (manifest only after puberty), but an omnipresent movement of the mind—a movement toward self-assertion, and yet toward social self-integration; a movement toward instinctive satisfactions, and yet toward a self-conscious organization and transformation of them; toward objective analysis, and yet toward a synthesis of experience in terms of meaning. Children's hearts turn toward the ideal world as naturally as toward the satisfactions of mere instinct. . . .

The religious instinct is an active tendency, intimately related to the whole complex of social tendencies; but it is very dependent upon the nature of the stimuli which cause it to function. If the idea of God, or the idea of God as Father, is never presented, the possession of the religious instinct can never make up for it. The religious instinct cannot of itself frame sufficient notions or a serviceable technique of religion in a single generation. It is true that in maturity a few individuals do surprisingly surpass the religious limitations of their day, and thus the prophets arise; and, doubtless, it is the religious instinct at bottom which accounts for this. But childhood has no such capacity; imitative, non-reflective, highly suggestible, the little child, if he builds at all, builds with the materials at hand.

This limitation makes the influence of religion upon him as presented by his environment almost absolutely determinant of his religious future. He is just about as certain to do and to believe what his group does and believes as he is to speak their language or to wear their kind of clothes. God will be to him a loving Father, a hideous idol, a menacing

and capricious spirit, or a neglected factor, according to the spirit and belief of his social group.

We have, then, to inquire concerning this social group whose influence is so determinative. It may be described as of concentric, ever-widening areas, the innermost of which is the family. Up to six years of age the child does not get far away from the home circle, his range is narrow and its influence absolute; but at six he enters a wider circle—he goes to school. There he is likely to discover that there are children whose parents do not belong to the church to which his parents belong, or perhaps do not go to church at all. Still, he does not question that his parents are right. If their attitude is quite tolerant, he will accept these other ways in religion as a kind of secondary good. But if they are intolerant, he may, when he happens to think of some other's religion, become quite a little bigot. By the time he is twelve he may be pretty well aware that a considerable portion of the community has no stated religious practice and largely ignores the church, while another considerable portion practices a great variety of rites and cherishes many different notions. This is not yet a problem to him; he simply accepts it as a fact.

The family is quite commonly, although by no means universally, religiously homogeneous. If it is so, and genuine and reverent in spirit, no other religious influence can vie with it in the years up to ten or twelve. But if there is no constant and genuine interest in the home, or if it is divided, then the case for religion becomes more difficult. Even with a divided home, where, for

example, the father is indifferent to religion, there is almost no limit to what a devoted mother may do for the religious nurture of her children. In any case the influence of the home is paramount. Where parents realize that they have not what they wish their children had, and send their children to Sunday school, the case is rendered difficult and doubtful by the religious indifference and incompetence of the home itself.

In a word, the kind of religion which the larger social group shall possess will ultimately be determined by the kind of religion which pervades the home. If we lose the battle for religion in the home, we lose it altogether. The church needs to do more to help parents appreciate this fact, to make them aware that they cannot delegate their children's religious nurture to any institution or individual, but that they themselves are responsible for it. The church needs to impress upon parents the absolute need of religious reverence and the religious graces in the home life. The place to begin is not with the homes which make no profession of religious faith; we may perhaps have no present access to them. The place to begin is with the homes which are nominally Christian, to which the minister and the Sunday-school worker have the entrée. The minister should know more about the subject from this angle, he should speak more often upon one or another aspect of it. The Sunday school may with profit include in its curriculum courses

which will help parents with their responsibilities. Such a class could do no better than adopt as a basis of its discussions the admirable treatment of this whole theme by Henry F. Cope in his volume *Religious Education in the Family*.

But there is a corollary of our conclusion which should not be overlooked. It is just this, that the whole environment, not merely that which has to do with religious ideas and practices as distinct from social usages and ideals, must be brought under control. And this is particularly true when we think of religion as related to childhood, for the religion of childhood is not chiefly either idea or cultus, it is happy self-realization in play, in fellowship, in doing what seems worth while; it is joyous self-expression through pursuit of the interests native to childhood, through good will and helpfulness and courtesy and the rules of the game. The whole temper of life, the range of ideals which it presents, the incentives to effort and its rewards, more intimately affect the development of the self than we are aware. Our interest in the religion of childhood therefore leads us to think of the spirit and discipline of the school and of the inspiration and direction of play life. If religion is to be integral to childhood and not something to be imported for a while every seventh day, it must be integrated with the primary interests and activities of childhood, with play and work, with study and the life outdoors.